

Dear Judge Leonie Brinkema,

My name is Kevin Hoang and Tyler Pham is my uncle. I grew up within a low-income family with 3 other siblings where both parents work +12hrs a day to make ends meet. During those years I would stay in our apartment all day and do nothing. Especially as a first generation Asian-American it was very difficult for me to make friends. If it hadn't been for Tyler being in my life, I wouldn't have gotten the opportunities to go outside and see that there was more to life than just watching tv for 8hrs a day. From taking time out of his day to just talk with and check up on me to simply just taking my cousins and I to the community pool. Tyler is a friend and a role model to me.

Due to our financial situation, it caused my parents to stress/fight and be verbally abusive to each other and to me and my siblings. Tyler helped me escape from my reality and see what I wanted for my life. He's taught me life lessons I'll never forget. He showed me how not to be greedy and to be caring and compassionate by example over and over again. He would take time off from his work weeks and invite all of my cousins on trips. We would go apple picking, snowboarding, and my most memorable place was the beach. He also introduced me to sports. None of those opportunities would've been possible for my parents to take us on.

Something he told me that I struggled to comprehend at the time was that family was the most important thing to hold on to. That ideology was hard for me to grasp due to my dysfunctional home situation. The anger, stress, and frustration from my parents would be passed onto me. As a kid you don't understand your emotions. You don't get why your school peers always seem happy. You don't understand why your sister is depressed. You don't understand why your mother is suicidal. It just takes a toll on you. I just thought everyone else was privileged and that god was punishing me.

Three words to summarize the best thing Tyler has ever taught me is "To be grateful". There are many things other kids have that I do not and there are some things that I have that they do not. Growing up as a teenager with only irritation and resentment is a toxic mindset. He taught me to count my blessings. I'm grateful to be healthy and have a big family that all live near each other. I'm grateful to be able to go to school and get the education my parents never received. Tyler showed me not to be angry at the world but to work hard to get out of the situation I was in. I am now 20yrs old, more family oriented, and still counting my blessings each day.

Thank you for reading,
Kevin Hoang